

Student Anti – Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

The Bedford College Group is committed to the promotion and development of equality and diversity. We aim to provide a working and learning environment which values individuals equally regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religious belief or trade union membership. In line with this ongoing commitment, The Bedford College Group considers that all learners have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and will not tolerate any form of bullying.

2. Definition of bullying

The following definition is the starting point when applying the College policy:

“Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”

(Department for Education, 2017)

However, bullying does not only depend on the intention of the offender, but also on the impact their behaviour has on others. What one individual may be able to accept may cause distress to another. What are important, therefore, are the perceptions and feelings of the persons involved.

3. Forms of bullying

Bullying can range from extremes, such as violence, to less obvious forms, for example ignoring someone. Whatever the form, it will be unwanted behaviour which is unwelcome and unpleasant and results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- **physical** – pushing and shoving, tripping up, kicking, spitting or any other use of physical contact
- **emotional** – humiliating someone, name calling, using insulting names or comments, making derogatory remarks, intrusive questioning or goading
- **driven by prejudice** – bullying behaviour because of, or focusing on, diversity issues such as race, sexuality, disability, age, transgender identity, religion, gender. This may include inappropriate language or taunts, gestures, graffiti etc.
- **verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making derogatory remarks, intrusive questioning or goading
- **sexual** – unwanted physical contact or inappropriate sexual comments
- **indirect** – spreading rumours whether true or not
- **cyber-bullying** – any form of bullying using a mobile phone, the internet or other electronic device, including chat rooms, social networking sites, instant messaging, camera/video facilities or email. (*For further information on cyberbullying, see Annex A.*)

It may also be bullying when:

- the same person or group always leaves someone out or shuns them
- someone makes threats of violence against someone else
- someone damages someone else's kit or clothing deliberately
- someone takes someone else's belongings deliberately
- someone tries to force someone else to do something they do not want to do
- someone tries to force another to do something sexual they do not want to do.

4. Prevention of bullying

The College recognises its responsibility to educate its students to counter bullying. This is achieved through a variety of means, including as appropriate:

- the tutorial framework
- the promotion of anti-bullying during the College's Health & Wellbeing Week
- raising awareness of our anti-bullying policy through RESPECT talks delivered by the Student Counsellors
- ensuring that students and staff are aware of what constitutes bullying and the consequences for those involved
- raising awareness of e-safety and cyber bullying through IT inductions
- delivering group tutorials on bullying and e-safety (including cyber-bullying)
- Peer on Peer Abuse Guidelines
- ensuring, through induction processes, student handbooks and the virtual learning environment, that students are aware of whom to approach with a concern and their rights to confidentiality in this context
- ensuring that staff understand whom students should approach with a concern and their rights to confidentiality in this context
- displaying literature promoting anti-bullying and giving advice on what constitutes bullying and the support the College offers.

5. Reporting incidents

Students may report bullying by:

- e-mailing safe@bedford.ac.uk / safe@tresham.ac.uk
- speaking to their Personal Achievement Tutor or a Student Services Adviser – if necessary they will advise the student about the College's complaints/disciplinary procedure
- Report the incident to any member of staff who will inform the Safeguarding Team.

The student must be informed that information will be recorded and may be passed to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and to the Head of Department (HoD) to investigate.

All allegations of bullying are taken seriously by the College. The Bedford College Group undertakes to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying. When a student reports a case of bullying, the matter will be dealt with initially by the Personal Achievement Tutor and investigated by a HoD as quickly as possible.

Where there is believed to be a risk of significant harm the case will be referred to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and dealt with through the safeguarding procedures.

If the allegation of bullying is against a member of College staff it must be reported through the formal grievance procedure and passed to the Human Resources department for action.

6. Recording incidents

When the student reports the bullying, the following information should be gathered:

- date(s), times(s) and place(s) of incident(s)
- name of any witnesses
- what actually happened
- how it made them feel
- any action taken e.g. reported to a member of staff
- original copies of any correspondence or written material connected with the issue
- where cyber bullying has taken place, printouts should be obtained wherever possible (e.g. of emails), or the member of staff taking the statement should sign it to say they have seen any text messages/call records on the student's mobile phone.

This information will inform the mediation process if it is decided to embark on this. It will also be used as evidence in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

7. Confidentiality

As a general guideline, members of staff will respect the confidentiality of the individual as long as it is consistent with the College's safeguarding policy and our safeguarding duties under the Education Act 2002.

Where confidentiality has to be broken, this must be discussed with the complainant to ensure they understand the reason for this. In some cases the individual may just want to talk about the bullying but may not wish to take matters further. Providing there is no requirement to do so under our safeguarding duties, a strategy should be developed with the student to help them address the situation.

8. Initial meeting and investigation

The Personal Achievement Tutor will initially meet with the student to discuss their concern. If it is thought possible that the matter may be resolved informally, this will normally be undertaken by a Personal Achievement Tutor. At the formal stage where disciplinary action is recommended, the investigating member of staff will usually be the HoD or Director, of the person causing offence. In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Student Services may instigate an independent investigation if there is evidence to suggest the matter may otherwise be prejudged.

The investigation may either be informal or formal depending on the needs of the complainant and the nature of the complaint. Often an informal approach at an early stage can offer the best solution before matters escalate.

Alternatively, it should be recognised that there will be instances where an individual talks on an informal basis, but because of the nature of the harassment and the risk of harm to self or others, a Designated Safeguarding Lead member must be informed. In such instances, formal action may be taken although this will always be discussed with the complainant to gain their consent and/or understanding that the matter must be taken further.

Informal

The informal (mediation) stage will normally be undertaken by a Personal Achievement Tutor.

Formal

If the matter has to be resolved formally under the Have Your Say procedure, the investigating member (the HoD or Director) should:

- carry out investigations within the timescales specified in the grievance procedure.
- set up initial interviews with both parties separately and explain the College policy on bullying
- keep a written record of all interviews and decisions taken
- be sensitive to personal feelings and perceptions (just because you cannot understand why someone feels harassed this does not mean that they are not)
- take appropriate decisions and actions as befits the nature of the offence
- enable the victim to discuss the incident and all possible courses of action e.g. empowering the victim to address the issue with the perpetrator, mediation or invoking the student disciplinary procedure
- ensure the complainant is not victimised as a result of making the complaint.

The outcome should be logged on ProMonitor.

Counselling can be offered to both parties. Appointments can be made in Student Services.

If the student is a victim of hate crime, he/she should be offered the opportunity and support to report this to the police.

9. Mediation

The mediator would ordinarily be a Student Counsellor, but may also be a member of the wider Student Services team. The mediator can help participants to resolve their dispute and to co-exist at the College, through using the following procedure:

- Both parties define the problem as they see it, individually with the mediator.
- The mediator identifies the key issues for both parties - these are listed on paper.
- At the end of the individual session with the mediator, the mediator ascertains whether or not the parties are willing to meet together, along with the mediator. This is the point when real mediation can take place, if both parties are willing to try to move towards reconciliation.
- At the joint meeting, led by the mediator, both parties should be encouraged to speak and express their opinion with only one person allowed to speak at a time. The mediator needs to control the meeting firmly, to ensure it does not turn into a battle.
- The mediator sets up a plan of action which will satisfy each party and obtains agreement on these.
- A follow up meeting is agreed and the situation monitored at agreed intervals.

10. Student disciplinary procedure

The Student Disciplinary (Misconduct) procedure may be invoked in the case of serious incidents of bullying or, following mediation, where no satisfactory plan of action can be formulated, or if the perpetrator continues his/her bullying behaviour.

11. Supporting the bully

There is often an underlying reason for bullying behaviour. A bully can be very insecure and may:

- have been bullied themselves
- be afraid of becoming a victim to someone else
- want to be accepted into a certain group
- want to be well-known for their physical status
- have low levels of self-esteem and self confidence.

Support may be required to enable a bully to change his/her behaviour. Breaking patterns of behaviour and expectations of other students and staff may make him/her a victim to others. Bullies wishing to reform should be

encouraged to seek help and advice from the Student Counsellor or their Personal Achievement Tutor.

A bully should be encouraged to change his/her behaviour and should not be intimidated, humiliated or made to feel uncomfortable when seeking support.

12. Designated safeguarding staff members

There is a team of Designated Safeguarding staff across The Bedford College Group and they can be contacted by emailing safe@bedford.ac.uk or safe@tresham.ac.uk, dependant on the site. The Safeguarding Lead is Em Lowe, Vice Principal.

13. Related information and links

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Student Disciplinary (Misconduct) Procedure
- www.childline.org.uk/explore/bullying
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- www.education.gov.uk
- <http://ceop.police.uk/>
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

12. Monitoring and review

All incidents of bullying and the outcomes are recorded centrally by Student Services on ProMonitor.

Where the matter has been referred to a Designated Safeguarding Staff Member it will be recorded as Peer on Peer abuse.

The Director of Student Services will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the anti-bullying policy annually and report to the College's Safeguarding Group. S/he will also be responsible for reviewing the policy by seeking confidential feedback from those involved and recommending changes where necessary to the College Safeguarding Group.

Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of any form of technology to bully another person. This could include any of the following:

- text messages
- images displayed on the internet
- setting up fake accounts on websites posing as another individual
- comments on Instant Messenger (IM) services
- social networking sites
- status updates about another individual
- telephone calls.

Obtaining evidence of cyberbullying

The one positive aspect of cyberbullying is that evidence can be easily collected. For cases of cyberbullying using computers, this can be done by:

- creating screen shots of cyberbullying on a computer. This can be done by pressing the PrtScn button on the computer keyboard and then pasting into another document
- printing the page or malicious communication
- saving conversations taking place on I.M. (usually called 'save chatlog').

Where cyberbullying occurs via text message the following steps should be taken to act as evidence:

- The member of staff shown the text message should complete an 'incident report' logging the following:
 - name of individual the message has been sent to
 - time and date the message was received
 - number the message was sent from (and name if known)
 - the wording from the text message.

If a member of staff observes cyberbullying in College the above steps for obtaining evidence should be taken. **However, if this is being done via the message facility on Moodle, the name of any of the students involved should be passed to Learning Technologies staff, who are able to retrieve the 'chat history'.**

Learning Technologies regularly sample activity on the Moodle message facility to guard against inappropriate use.

All cases of suspected cyberbullying must be reported to a designated safeguarding staff member or his/her representative. The case should then be dealt with as per other forms of bullying. If no perpetrator is identified and the matter is ongoing, the complainant should be advised to contact the police as they are often able to trace electronic communication of such nature.

Cyberbullying and the law

Cyberbullying breaks the law under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, Section 1.